

## An insight into the role of dentists against the new epidemic of “Drug Abuse”



*"When you can stop you don't want to, and when you want to stop, you can't....."*

-Luke Davies

Drug abuse or more appropriately substance abuse has become a household term recently, all thanks to the colossal publicity given to a fresh Bollywood release “Udta Punjab.” The directors of the movie seem to have exaggerated the subject on whole unlike our society notions, whereby we underrate the prevalence, perils, and sequelae of this menace. The need of the hour states that we as dental health professionals should personally engage ourselves in taking up the responsibility against substance abuse at both clinical and social echelons.

Drug abuse has skyrocketed in the past several years and so is the number of patients seeking oral health consultation. Abusers certainly face devastating personal, professional, and social consequences sooner or later. Such patients pose a burden on their family, society, and nation at large. The role of dentists covers a wide array of liabilities for such patients ranging from diagnosis to complete resolution of any oral problem. Although optimal health care requires thorough information about abusers, surveys all over the world reveal that majority health care professionals are uncomfortable discussing alcohol and drug use with their patients due to immense misunderstanding and stigma associated with the same. However, it is exceptionally difficult to change the present mindset and trend; the time has actually come to break this norm. To achieve this, the dentist must become skilled at detection of physical and behavioral signs in the patients that are indicators of drug abuse. At the outset, a high index of suspicion is imperative for all the patients walking into the dental office. Drug abusers employ a variety of tactics to procure drugs for themselves and have a smart understanding of

defending such tactics about which we need to be always alarmed. Thorough knowledge for management of therapeutic complications arising during the treatment of drug abuse patients in dental clinics is mandatory now. Last but not the least, a dentist should also endorse the role of a counselor who can provide an empathic consultation not only to the abuser but also to the family concerned as Russell Brand rightly said that “The mentality and behavior of drug addicts and alcoholics is wholly irrational until you understand that they are completely powerless over their addiction and unless they have structured help, they have no hope.”

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